

When I nominated Chuck Kleinhans for the first ever SCMS Pedagogy Award I expected my letter to be one amongst many in a deep basket—a basket rich in history, not just of personal memories of a teacher who many of us have already begun to speak of as a legend but also the history of our discipline which he has helped shape, along with Julia Lesage and John Hess, through Jump Cut. Letters flowed in, indeed, from students and colleagues—over thirty of them. All letters are available upon request and because of limitations of space I have excerpted some of them. The writers are mentioned by name.

It has been absolutely delightful to go through them and discover patterns that run through three decades of Chuck's teaching. What made it so enjoyable is Chuck himself; you cannot write about the teacher and the man without a deep chuckle at what this radical intellectual has managed to do through teaching! I only hope that I am able to adequately represent these many voices and histories.

Chuck has spent the last thirty or so years in the academy as a kind of Robin Hood figure; one whose primary weapon is a sharp-edged intellect that thrives on drawing out the absurdities of power in culture and the academy. Chuck performs this satire relentlessly—in the way he dresses, speaks, and routinely debunks academic sacred cows by tackling subjects considered too risqué for the classroom, bringing theory down to its use value, and demystifying academic phenomenon such as conferences, tenure, and getting a job. He often told us that he drove a bus before he got his first academic job! He is known to have introduced his class on pornography by announcing to a somewhat anxious group, with his hand resting on the television monitor, "I teach porn because I like it!"

Students, particularly graduate students, are drawn to this demystification of academic life because they are at its bottom—a source of "cheap labor and tuition dollars," as Chuck explained in 1973, while a graduate student himself, in a comic strip drawn anonymously in Common Sense so as "to protect the artist during his prelims." The article asked the basic question graduate students are too insecure to ask: why do their professors verbally distort relatively simple ideas into complex, unrecognizable forms? As a teacher, Chuck was simply too secure and committed to education to rest on such pretentious tactics to win the respect of his students. Instead, he engaged us as fellow-learners, inviting us to make theory our own by showing that it could be a useful tool to understand and transform the world. For instance, in one class Ramona Curry handed in a newspaper clipping about the widespread circulation of copies of a sex-tape of the local sheriff and his wife. The sheriff, from Ramona's hometown, had inadvertently returned a VCR to the local video store with the tape still inside it. Ramona offered

this news as a discussion starter for Walter Benjamin's thesis of the loss of aura in the age of mechanical reproduction. Chuck's class on Bordieu included a fashion show in which students explained the statement they were making through what they had chosen to wear that day. Eric Hoyt writes that Chuck transformed his thinking about film, changing it from a strictly formalist and aesthetic perspective to seeing the cultural, historical, and political implications in film.

Aaron Anderson, a former student, speaks for all of us who have studied with Chuck when he says, "To this day, as a teacher, I strive to emulate Dr. Kleinhans' pedagogy in all my classes, for the best gifts he gave me were the ability to find my own voice and the courage to share my knowledge with others (regardless of what are sometimes considered disciplinary boundaries)." Chuck initiated and was involved in several interdisciplinary ventures at Northwestern: among them, the Documentary Interest Group, Ford Foundation integrated Arts project (1988–90), Theory Group (Center for Interdisciplinary Research in the Arts), and the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Theater and Drama. His students regularly came from Sociology, Anthropology, Performance Studies, and Comparative Literature. Michele Citron calls him a "nimble crosser of boundaries" who integrated theory and production both in his teaching and creative work, mentoring several MFAs as well as Ph.Ds. Chuck's commitment to interdisciplinary study as the best way to approach media culture has been longstanding—a position that has now gone mainstream. What is truly striking is his student-centered conviction that interdisciplinary study is, ultimately, the best way to develop a person's full potential. Amongst his papers, I found him arguing to the Comparative Literature chair in a memo written in 1987: I believe, that once a student is admitted to a program of graduate study, the major obligation of the faculty is to maximize growth and development of that student, not to sort and stratify them. Our programs are small enough that we should be able to see each student as unique and full of individual potentials we can encourage, particularly in inherently interdisciplinary and cross cultural contexts.

Chuck's mentoring continues after the students have long gone and extends beyond his students to the wider film and media studies community through his editorial work on *Jump Cut* and recently *Cinema Journal*. Hamid Naficy recounts that he came to know Chuck, about twenty years ago, through a contribution he made to *Jump Cut*. *Jump Cut* has remained on the cutting edge of engaged, critical, and positioned media criticism, discussing non-Western, cross-cultural, experimental and Third Cinema, class, gender, race and sexuality much before the more mainstream academic journals pick them up.

Chuck inspired students to take charge of their education and, as Jane Gaines recalls, pioneered the teaching of feminist film theory “before there was a female professor in the department.” His students include a literal who’s who of feminist theorists, including Ellen Seiter, Jane Gaines, Gina Marchetti, Chris Staayer, Charlotte Herzog, Ramona Curry, and many others. Some organized the “Feminar” a graduate seminar and the Lolita Raclin Rogers Memorial Conference in 1978, the first feminist film conference in the U.S. Long before Blackboards, Chuck encouraged peer-based autonomous study through journals shared online and before that through mimeographed reports of each day. This has led to life-long friendships and solidarity amongst Chuck’s students creating a large extended family that is scattered all over the globe and traverses at least three decades.

“I learnt from Chuck,” Kate Kane writes, “to be courageous in class, to be willing to try something unorthodox, and at the same time to consider how to make the classroom a safe place to study difficult subjects and he is a real star when it comes to feminist, queer, and class questions.” Gretchen Bisplinghoff remembers Chuck for fighting battles at the peril of his own career, for the rights of women students to equal financial aid, teaching assistantships, and providing the foundations for feminist/queer scholarship. J.B. Capino sums it up: As a lifelong activist Chuck could always be counted upon to stand up for labor issues of teaching assistants and other sensitive university politics. Both Julia and Chuck paid the price for that commitment. A 1981 issue of the Daily Northwestern carries a picture of a smiling Julia with the heading, “Marxist views cost job.”

“Northwestern may have been a privileged oasis on the shores of Lake Michigan” writes David Douglas now teaching at Concordia but for Chuck, it was always important that his students find ways to connect their university experience to those who lived elsewhere. Chris List recalls that when she first met him he had just returned from Nicaragua where he had been living with a family, videotaping and learning about Central American media and culture through the civil war and counterinsurgency attacks. Chuck encouraged his students to extend their education in media studies to incorporate political intervention and activism, frequently assigning “fieldwork” to explore cultural influences in their communities. Elspeth Kydd, now teaching in the university of the West of England, recalls analyzing representations of sexuality in the different churches around Evanston. In Chicago, Chuck is well known to the independent film community and has exhibited work and delivered lectures to the general public in places as varied as Chicago Filmmakers to the Art Institute.

A teacher of teachers, as his colleagues, Manju Pendakur and Lynn Spigel describe him, Chuck taught us how to critique, teach, develop curriculum, and, as Ilene Goldman recounts, that some students need to fail. Chuck had no patience with pretension or academic timidity. He is the kind of teacher who would write “so what?” or stamp “Bull Shit” on papers, who freely lost his temper if students had their minds elsewhere in class, and who wrote, “what has money got to do with the grade?” in response to a whining student complaining that for the amount of money he was paying to Northwestern he deserved a better grade. At the same time Chuck has infinite patience and faith in his students. “Chuck believed in me,” Tony Perrine, writes “and supported me as I gained confidence in my intellectual abilities. A working class kid from Flint, Michigan and a single mother of two young children, my prospects for finishing a Ph.D. did not look too promising, but Chuck never expected anything else.” Zehra Turin, now living in Turley, remembers a long snowy afternoon in Chicago when Chuck went over her final draft, standing for hours because of a back injury that made it too painful to sit down. Turin ends her tribute to Chuck by saying that if she ever knew that she was shooting her very last film she would have a very last frame, after the credits, which would read, “Thank You Chuck.”

I end by echoing Gina Marchetti that as Chuck Kleinhans moves into phased retirement this is an excellent opportunity for the entire film community to thank him for his contribution to teaching. This expression of gratitude come not only from us undergraduate and graduate students, but so many others in the profession who have been touched by his commitment to social justice and political change. Our Robin Hood teacher can also look like Santa Claus. Then, I remember a icy Chicago night when I took a ride with him in his car and he slipped on his Santa Claus hat and said, “See, now they will happily let me pass.” There is really nobody more deserving of the first ever SCMS pedagogy Award than Chuck Kleinhans. Like Robin Hood, if we did not have him we would have to invent him!